

January 13, 2014

Bob Ziegler
SEPA/NEPA Coordinator, WDFW Regulatory Services Section

RE: DNS 13-082: WHISKEY DICK WILDLIFE AREA SEASONAL ROAD CLOSURE

Dear Sir,

One of the most confounding actions I've seen during years of involvement in public land-use issues is this one by the WA DFW to open the Whiskey Dick Winter Closure Area to motorized travel. The word "Confounding" has among its synonyms the words: surprise, bewilder, baffle, perplex, confuse, and dumfounded - all can be appropriately applied to the Department's proposal.

A companion to the Department's proposal is the misleading first sentence in the DNS that begins with: "The proposal is to restrict the use of motor vehicles within portions....etc". Wording that would agree with the DNS intent would more accurately read : The proposal is to liberalize the current winter-closure policy in order to allow.....etc"

It defies logic to read the bulk of the Department's DNS that details all the good scientifically-supported reasons for instituting the winter closure plus the follow-up assessments that corroborate the decision, and then proceeds to go in a contrary direction to advocate opening a key road in the winter closure area to vehicular travel. It's not fair to limit the projected limited impact to the road bed. Analysis has shown that more than 50% of motorized recreationists admit to travelling off road.

I'm aware from years of involvement with the USFS on land-use issues related to passage of the Alpine Lakes Management Plan in 1976 that immediately created a near four hundred thousand acre Alpine Lakes Wilderness and a more than five hundred thousand acre surrounding Management Unit where all the controversies lie, that there's a difference between what people in the field think and feel with that of people in the higher echelons of the organization. On environmentally-related issues where research is more meaningfully and intimately a part of what they do, field people can differ significantly with what finally becomes 'company policy'. I think that must be the situation with respect to this DNS – it seems inconceivable to me that DFW people in the field would be in support of this DNS.

This proposal is so disappointing. My personal feeling is of course irrelevant if I'm the only one to feel this way. If it's significantly more widely held, a decision to open the winter-closure area to vehicular traffic could do the WDFW considerable harm.

I close by directing decision makers to the specific comments presented by Kittitas Audubon Society of which I'm a member.

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